



Minimizing Violence in the Workplace

Each year, nearly 2 million American workers are victims of workplace violence. And those numbers continue to rise. Fortunately, you can learn how to recognize the signs of workplace violence and protect yourself and others from potential harm.

What Is Workplace Violence?

Workplace violence is defined as any act of physical, verbal or psychological threat, assault or trauma, resulting in physical and/or psychological injury. Although each case may look different, there are common indicators associated with workplace violence:

- Prior history of violent behavior
- Physical threats
- Verbal threats (direct or veiled)
- Intimidation tactics
- Obsessiveness towards a "target" (i.e. organization or a person)
- Holding grudges; frequently externalizes problems and blames others; may complain of persecution
- Social isolation
- Access to and knowledge of firearms; excessive talk about guns
- History of mental illness (i.e. paranoia, depression, etc.)
- Substance abuse
- Current life crisis (i.e. divorce, job change, loss, etc.)
- Tends to push limits of normal conduct in the workplace
- Sense of entitlement
- Angry or abusive comments made toward others at work
- Impulsive and/or unpredictable behavior
- Rigid and mistrustful
- Poor insight and poor judgment about interpersonal conflict
- Familiarity with workplace violence elsewhere; identifies with perpetrators

Making Your Workplace Safe

Here are some ways to reduce your risk of violence in the workplace:

- Learn how to recognize, avoid or diffuse potentially violent situations by familiarizing yourself with the list above and by attending personal safety training programs if available.
- Alert supervisors to any concerns you may have about safety or security and report all incidents immediately and in writing.
- Establish security procedures and emergency phone numbers well before any violent warning signs are present.
- Know about the operation of your building's safety devices, including alarm systems.

How MHN Can Help

As a State of California employee, you are an MHN member and have access to a range of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) benefits to help you live with optimal health and well-being. MHN, your EAP, offers services to promote your safety, wellness and security. Our EAP management consultants can assist managers in addressing workplace violence issues. If you're concerned about a potential situation, we encourage you to call us at (866) EAP-4SOC. Our consultants will help you identify the type of intervention that would be appropriate given your circumstance.

For help with workplace violence, call MHN anytime at (866) EAP-4SOC.

This article is for informational and self-help purposes only. It should not be treated as a substitute for medical, psychiatric, psychological or behavioral health care advice, or as a substitute for consultation with a qualified professional.